

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 PM-04 MC-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PRS-01 L-03 /027 W
----- 070397

P R 101213Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 990
INFO SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
USIA WASHDC
COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 5467

USIA PASS IEA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, MPOL, TH
SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT FROM VIENTNAM AND LAOS

REF: BANGKOK 5366

1. NEWSMEN HAVE ASKED WHETHER U.S. CLAIMS OWNERSHIP OF HELICOPTER REPORTED REFTEL. WE HAVE REPLIED: "THE HELICOPTER IS IN THE POSSESSION OF THAI AUTHORITIES. U.S. OFFICIALS ARE LOOKING INTO THE MATTER."

2. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE HELICOPTER, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOJ REPORTEDLY REPLIED CRYPTICALLY: "IT WILL BE RETURNED TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER."

3. SINCE WE HAVE NOT HAD ACCESS TO THE HELICOPTER OR TO THE O-1 FROM LAOS, WE CANNOT ASCERTAIN THEIR PROVENANCE. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE TAIL NUMBERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED, AND A MARKING VISIBLE IN A PRESS PHOTO OF THE HELICOPTER HAS BEEN TENTATIVELY IDENTIFIED AS NORTH VIETNAMESE.

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4. PLANES AND POSSIBLY ALSO BOATS OF MAP/MASF ORIGIN

(IF THAT IS THE CASE) MUST BE EXPECTED TO TRICKLE OUT
INTO THAILAND FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE
SHOULD INDEFINITELY CONTINUE TO ROIL THE WATERS BETWEEN
THAILAND AND THE U.S. AND BETWEEN THAILAND AND HER NEIGHBORS
BY INSISTING ON U.S. TITLE.

5. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND LEAVING THIS MATTER FOR THE THAI
TO WORK OUT WITH THE VIETNAMESE, IN THE CASE OF THE
HELICOPTER, AND WITH THE LAO IN THE CASE OF THE O-1. WE COULD
SEEK EXPLICIT ASSURANCES FROM THE THAI THAT THEY WOULD NOT
REGARD SUCH A POSITION AS ESTABLISHING A RETROACTIVE
PRECEDENT THAT MIGHT BE APPLIED TO EARLIER MILITARY ITEMS
RECOVERED FROM INDOCHINA.

6. DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS REQUESTED.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

Message Attributes

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